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WASHINGTON, DC (November 7, 2009) – History was made today in the century long fight to reform the American health care system and provide quality, affordable health care to all Americans. With the strong support of Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-IL, the House passed the Affordable Health Care for America Act, which will make health care affordable for the middle class, provide security for seniors, and guarantee access to health insurance coverage for the uninsured.

"We are one step closer to lifting the burden of worrying about health care from all Americans. I believe strongly that every American should have access to affordable health care; that's what I'm fighting for and that is what we moved closer to achieving today," said Rep. Schakowsky. "We made history today and are closer to reforming health insurance than we ever have been before."

The health care reform that Rep. Schakowsky championed will have a profound impact on the people in the 9th District of Illinois alone, the Affordable Health Care for America Act will improve employer-based coverage for 402,000 residents; provide credits to help pay for coverage for up to 138,000 households; improve Medicare for
101,000
beneficiaries, including closing the prescription drug donut hole for
8,600
seniors; allow
15,600
small businesses to obtain affordable health care coverage and provide tax credits to help reduce health insurance costs for up to
14,100
small businesses; provide coverage for
54,000
uninsured residents, protect up to
1,500
families from bankruptcy due to unaffordable health care costs; and reduce the cost of uncompensated care for hospitals and health care providers by

$126 million

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This historic reform will provides a choice to consumers that will serve as a check against insurance companies, keeping rates affordable and ensuring quality care. Through the public health insurance option, available within the Exchange, choice, competition and accountability are ensured. Like other private plans, the public option must survive on its premiums.

Also, this reform ends the practice of refusing care for pre-existing conditions or dropping coverage when care is needed most. There are 10,700 individuals in Rep. Schakowsky's district who have pre-existing medical conditions that could prevent them from buying insurance. Under the bill's insurance reforms, they will now be able to purchase affordable coverage.

"It is so important to make health care affordable for everyone. We are finally recognizing for the first time that health care is a right and should not impoverish people or cause them personal bankruptcies.   People suffer the most when they lose their job because they also lose their care.
This bill makes that practice a thing of the past and gives people peace of mind," said Rep. Schakowsky. "I am looking forward to seeing the President sign the health care reform bill into law by the end of this year."

The Senate is still considering its version of health care reform. After passage, expected later

this month, the House and Senate will form a conference committee to resolve differences. The final version will be voted on in both chambers and sent to the President for his signature.